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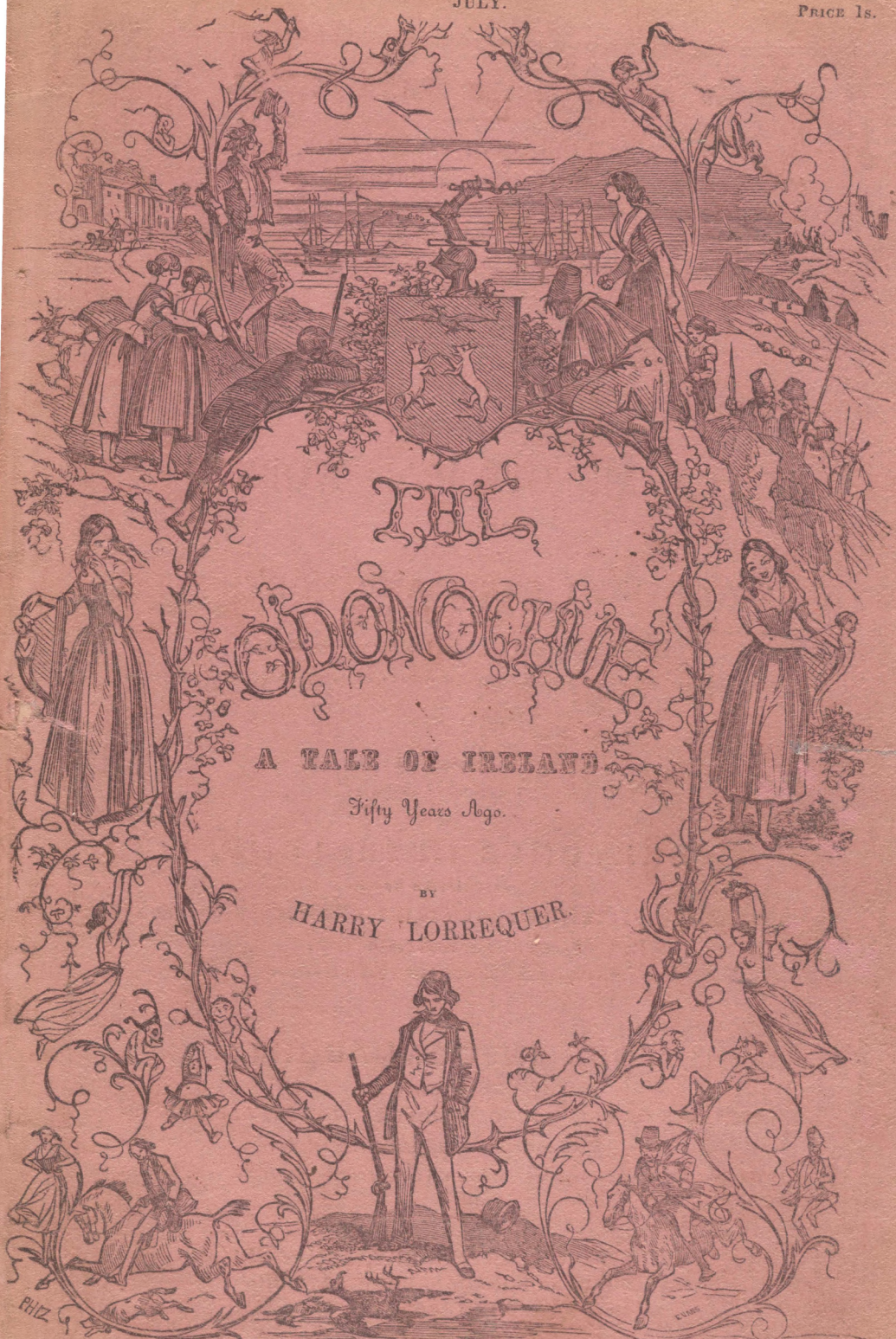

THE O'DONOGHUE

A TALE OF IRELAND

Fifty Years Ago.

BY

HARRY LORREQUER.

WILLIAM CURRY, JUN. AND CO., SACKVILLE-STREET, DUBLIN.

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Good Night!

Mark, drawing a cork.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"A WALK BY MOONLIGHT."

THE visit alluded to in the last chapter formed the first step to an acquaintance which speedily ripened into intimacy. Seldom a day passed without some interchange of civilities; and as they progressed in knowledge of each other, they advanced in esteem, so that, ere long, they learned to regard themselves as members of a single family. The conventional usages of society are stronger barriers against friendship than the world deems them. The life of cities supplies a coinage of social intercourse which but very imperfectly represents the value of true feeling; while in remoter and less cultivated regions, men are satisfied to disencumber themselves of this false currency, and deal frankly and openly with each other.

How little now did Sir Marmaduke remember of all Sir Archy's peculiarities of manner and expression! how seldom did Sybella think Kate's opinions wild and eccentric! and how difficult would it have been to convince the fastidious Guardsman, that the society of St. James's possessed any superiority in tone or elegance over the evenings at "the Lodge."

The real elements of mutual liking were present here: the discrepancy of character and taste—the great differences of age, and habit of thought—yet moulded into one common frame of esteem from the very appreciation of qualities in others, in which each felt himself deficient. If Kate admired the simple but high-minded English girl, whose thoughts were rarely faulty, save when attributing to others higher and purer motives than the world abounds in, Sybella looked up with enthusiastic delight to the glittering talents of her Irish friend—the warm and generous glow of her imagination—the brilliant flashes of her wit—the ready eloquence of her tongue, and, perhaps, not least of all, the intrepid fearlessness of her nature, inspired her with sentiments of almost awe, which seemed to deepen, and not diminish her affection for Kate O'Donoghue.

It might appear an ungenerous theme to dwell on; but how often are our friendships suggested by self-love?—how frequently are we led to

think highly and speak praisingly of qualities the opposite to our own, from the self-satisfaction our apparent impartiality yields us. Justice must, indeed, be a great virtue, when its very shadow can ennoble human nature. Not such, however, were the motives here. Kate's admiration for the unerring rectitude of Sybella's character was as free from taint as was Sybella's heartfelt enthusiasm for the Irish girl. As for Frederick Travers, the same dissimilarity in character which made him at first compare Kate with his sister disadvantageously, now induced him to be struck and fascinated by her qualities. The standard by which he had measured her, she had long since passed, in his estimation; and any idea of a comparison between them would now have appeared ridiculous. It was true many of her opinions savoured of a nationality too strong for his admiration. She was intensely Irish—or at least what he deemed such. The traditions which, as a child, she had listened to with eager delight, had given a bias to her mind that grew more confirmed with years. The immediate circumstances of her own family added to this feeling, and her pride was tinctured with sorrow at the fallen condition of her house. All her affection for her cousins could not blind her to their great defects. In Mark she saw one whose spirit seemed crushed and stunned, and not awakened by the pressure of misfortune. Herbert, with all his kindliness of nature and open-heartedness, appeared more disposed to enjoy the sunshine of life, than to prepare himself to buffet with its storms.

How often she wished she had been a boy; how many a day-dream floated before her of such a career as she might have struck out! Ireland a nation—her "own sons her rulers"—had been the theme of many an oft-heard tale, and there was a poetry in the sentiment of a people recalled to a long-lost, long-sought-for nationality, that excited and exalted her imagination.

Her convent education had stored her mind with narratives of native suffering and Saxon tyranny, and she longed for the day of retribution on the "proud invaders." Great was her disappointment at finding her cousins so dead to every feeling of this kind; and she preferred the chivalrous ardour of the English soldier to the sluggish apathy of Mark, or the happy indolence of Herbert O'Donoghue.

Had Frederick Travers been an Irishman, would he have borne his country's wrongs so meekly? was a reflection that more than once occurred to her mind, and never more powerfully than on parting with him, the very evening we have mentioned. He had accompanied them, on their return to Carrig-na-curra, which, as the night was fine and the moon nearly at her full, they did on foot. Kate, who rarely accepted an arm

when walking, had, by some accident, taken his on this occasion, Sir Archy leaning on that of Herbert.

The young soldier listened with a high-beating heart, as she related an incident, of which the spot they were traversing had been the scene. It was a faithless massacre of a chieftain and his followers, seduced, under pretences of friendship and a pledge of amity.

"They told him," said she, "that his young wife, who had been carried away by force, and imprisoned for two entire years, should on this spot be restored to him; that he had but to come, with twelve of his retainers, unarmed, save with their swords, and that here, where we now stand, she should once more become his own. The hour was sunset, and he waited, with anxious impatience, beneath that tall cliff yonder, where you can see the deep cleft. Strange enough, they have added a legend to the true story, as if their wrongs could derive any force from fiction! and they tell you still, that the great rock was never split until that night. Their name for it, in Irish, is "the rent," or "the ruptured pledge." Do I weary you with these old tales?"

"No, no; go on, I entreat you. I cannot say how the scene increases its fascinations, from connection with your story."

"He stood yonder, where the black shadow now crosses the road, and having dismounted, he gave his horse to one of his attendants, and walked, with an anxious heart, up and down, waiting for their approach.

"There was less sympathy among his followers for their chieftain's sorrow than might be expected; for she was not a native born, but the daughter of an English earl. He, perhaps, loved her the more—her very friendlessness was another tie between them."

"Says the legend so, or is this a mere suspicion on your part?" whispered Travers softly.

"I scarcely know," continued Kate, with an accent less assured than before. "I believe I tell you the tale as I have heard it; but why may she not have been his own in every sentiment and thought—why not have imbibed the right, from him she learned to love?" The last words were scarcely uttered, when, with a sudden exclamation, less of fear than astonishment, Kate grasped Travers' arm, and exclaimed—"Did you see that!"

"I thought some dark object moved by the road side."

"I saw a man pass, as if from behind us, and gain the thicket yonder: he was alone, however."

"And I am armed," said Travers, coolly.

"And if you were not," replied she, proudly, "an O'Donoghue has nothing to fear in the valley of Glenflesk. Let us join my uncle, how-

ever, for I see he has left us some distance behind him;" and while they hastened forward, she resumed her story with the same unconcern as before the interruption.

Travers listened eagerly—less, it is true, in sympathy with the story, than in delight at the impassioned eloquence of her who related it. "Such," said she, as they turned to bid him farewell at the old keep on the road side, "such are the traditions of our land; they vary in time and place, and persons; but they have only one moral through all—what a terrible thing is slavery!"

Travers endeavoured to turn the application of her speech, by some common-place compliment about her own powers of inflicting bondage; but she stopped him suddenly, with "Nay, nay; these are not jesting themes, although you may deem them unsuited for one as ignorant and inexperienced as I am; nor will I speak of them again, if they serve but as matter for laughter."

Amid his protestations of innocence against this charge, which, in his ardour, he pushed farther than calmer judgment might warrant, they shook hands cordially, and parted.

"He's a fine-hearted fellow, too," thought Kate, as she slowly moved along in silence. "Saxon though he be, there's a chord in his bosom that responds to the touch of truth and honour."

"Noble girl," said Frederick, half aloud, "it would be hard to rebuke treason, when spoken from such lips;" then added, with a smile—"It's no fair temptation to expose even a Guardsman to."

And thus, each speculated on the character of the other, and fancied how, by their own influence, it might be fashioned and moulded to a better form; nor was their interest lessened in each other's fortune from the fact, that it seemed to involve so much of mutual interposition.

"You should not walk this road so late," said Mark O'Donoghue, almost rudely, as he opened the door to admit them. "The smugglers are on the coast now, and frequently come up the glen at nightfall."

"Why not have come to be our escort, then?" said Kate, smiling.

"What? With the gay soldier for your guard," said he, bitterly.

"How knew you that, my worthy cousin?" said Kate, rapidly, and then, with a significant shake of the head, added, in a whisper—"I see there *are* marauders about."

Mark blushed till his face became scarlet, and turning abruptly away, sought his own room in silence.

CHAPTER XXV.

"A DAY OF DIFFICULT NEGOCIATIONS."

THE time was now approaching when the Travers's were to remove to the capital, and, at Sybella's urgent entreaty, Sir Marmaduke was induced to request that Kate O'Donoghue might accompany them in their visit, and thus enjoy the pleasures of a winter in Dublin, then, second to no city of Europe, in all that constituted social excellence.

The note of invitation couched in terms the most flattering and cordial, arrived when the O'Donoghues were seated at breakfast, and, as was usual on all occasions of correspondence, was opened by Kate herself; scarcely had she thrown her eyes over its contents, when, with a heightened colour, and a slight tremor in her voice, she passed the letter across the table to her uncle, and said—"This is for your consideration, sir."

"Then, you must read it for me, Kate," replied he; "for my ears have outlived my eyes."

"Shall I do it," interposed Sir Archy, who, having remarked some hesitation in Kate's manner, came thus good-naturedly to the rescue.

"With all my heart, Archy," said the O'Donoghue; "or rather, if you would do me a favour, just tell me what it is about—polite correspondence affects me pretty much as the ceremonies of bowing and salutation, when I have a fit of the gout. I become devilish impatient, and would give the world it was all over, and that I were back in my easy chair again."

"The politeness in the present case, lies less in the style than in the substance," said Sir Archy. "This is a vara civil, though, I must say, to me a vara unwelcome proposal, to take our darling Kate away from us, for a season, and show her some of the life and gaieties of the capital."

"Well, that is handsomely done, at least," said the O'Donoghue, whose first thought sprung from gratified pride, at the palpable

evidence of social consideration; then suddenly changing his tone, he said in a low voice; "but what says Kate herself?"

Mark turned his eyes full upon her, as his father said these words, and as a deadly pallor came over his face, he sat steadfastly awaiting her reply, like one expecting the decree of a judge.

"Kate feels too happy here, sir, to risk anything by a change," replied she, avoiding, even for a second, to look towards where Mark was sitting.

"But you must not lose such an opportunity, dearest Kate;" whispered Herbert eagerly into her ear. "These are the scenes, and the places you are used to, and best fitted to enjoy and to adorn, and besides——"

A stern frown from Mark, who, if he had not overheard the speech, seemed to have guessed its import, suddenly arrested the youth, who now looked overwhelmed with confusion.

"We are a divided cabinet; that I see plainly enough, Kate;" said O'Donoghue; "though, if our hearts were to speak out, I'd warrant they would be of one mind. Still, this would be a selfish verdict, my dear girl, and a poor requital for all the happiness you have brought back to these old walls;" and the words were spoken with a degree of feeling that made all indisposed to break the silence that followed.

"I should like to see the capital, I own," said Kate, "if my absence were to be a short one."

"And I wad hae nae objection the capital should see yersel," said Sir Archy; "albeit, I may lose a sweetheart by my generosity."

"Have no fears of my fidelity," said Kate, laughing, as she extended her hand towards him, while, with antique gallantry, he pressed it to his lips. "The youth of this land are not, so far as my little experience goes, likely to supplant so true an admirer; they who have so little devotion to their country, may well be suspected of having less for its daughters."

Mark's brow grew dark with the flush that covered his face and forehead in an instant; he bent his head almost to the table to avoid observation, and, as if in the distraction of the moment, he took up the note and seemed to pore over its contents; then suddenly crushing it in his hand, he arose from the table and left the room.

"My sweet Kate," said Sir Archy, as he led her within the deep recess of a window, "tak care ye dinna light up a flame of treason, where ye only hoped to warm a glow of patriotism; such eyes and lips

as yours are but too ready teachers; be cautious, lassie. This country, however others may think, is on the eve of some mighty struggle; the people have abandoned many of their old grudges and seem disposed to unite."

"And the gentry—where are they, who should stand at their head and share their fortune?" cried Kate eagerly; for the warning, so far from conveying the intended moral, only stimulated her ardour and excited her curiosity.

"The gentry," replied Sir Archy, in a firm, decided tone, "are better satisfied to live under a government they dislike, than to be at the mercy of a rabble they despise. I ha'e lived langer than you in this dreary world, lassie, and trust me, the poetry of patriotism has little relation to the revengeful fury of rebellion. You wish freedom for those who cannot enjoy the portion of it they possess. It is time to outlive the evil memories of the past, we want here—time, to blunt the acuteness of former and long-past sufferings—time, to make traditions so far forgotten as to be inapplicable to the present—time, to read the homely lesson, that one half the energy a people can expend in revolt, will raise them in the rank of civilized and cultivated beings."

"Time, to make Irishmen forget that the land of their birth was ever other than an English province," added Kate, impetuously. "No, no, it was not thus your own brave countrymen understood their 'devoirs.'"

"They rallied round the standard of a prince they loved, lassie," said M'Nab, in a tone whose fervour contrasted with his former accent.

"And will you tell me that the principle of freedom is not more sacred than the person of the sovereign?" said Kate, tauntingly.

"There can be nae mistake about the one, but folks may have vara unsettled notions of the other," said he, drily; "but we mauna quarrel, Kate dear; our time is e'en too short already. Sit ye down and sing me a sang."

"It shall be a rebel one, then, I promise you," replied she, with an air of defiance which it was impossible to pronounce more real or assumed. "But here comes a visitor to interrupt us, and so your loyalty is saved for this time."

The observation was made in reference to a traveller, who, seated in a very antique looking dennet, was seen slowly labouring his wearied horse up the steep ascent to the castle.

"It's Swaby, father," cried Herbert, who immediately recognized the equipage of the Cork attorney, and felt a certain uneasiness come over him at the unexpected appearance.

"What brings him down to these parts?" said the O'Donoghue,

affecting an air of surprise—"on his way to Killarney, perhaps. Well, well, they may let him in."

The announcement did not, to all appearance, afford much pleasure to the others, for scarcely had the door bell ceased its jingle, when each quitted the drawing-room, leaving O'Donoghue alone to receive his man of law.

Although the O'Donoghue waited with some impatience for the entrance of his legal adviser, that worthy man did not make his appearance at once, his progress to the drawing-room being arrested by Sir Archy, who, with a significant gesture, motioned him to follow him to his chamber.

"I will no' detain you many minutes, Mr. Swaby," said he, as he made signs for him to be seated. "I hae a sma' matter of business in which you can serve me. I need scarcely observe, I reckon on your secrecy."

Mr. Swaby closed one eye, and placed the tip of his finger on his nose—a pantomime intended to represent the most perfect fidelity.

"I happen," resumed Sir Archy, apparently satisfied with this pledge; "I happen at this moment to need a certain sum of money, and would wish to receive it on these securities. They are title deeds of a property, which, for reasons I have no leisure at this moment to explain, is at present held by a distant relative in trust for my heir. You may perceive that the value is considerable"—and he pointed to a formidable array of figures which covered one of the margins. "The sum I require is only a thousand pounds—five hundred at once—immediately—the remainder in a year hence. Can this be arranged?"

"Money was never so scarce," said Swaby, as he wiped his spectacles and unfolded one of the cumbrous parchments. "Devil take me, if I know where it's all gone to. It was only last week I was trying to raise five thousand for old Hoare on the Ballyrickan property, and I could not get any one to advance me sixpence. The country is unsettled you see. There's a notion abroad that we'll have a rising soon, and who knows what's to become of landed property after."

"This estate is in Perth," said M'Nab, tapping the deeds with his finger.

"So I perceive," replied Swaby; "and they have no objection to a 'shindy' there too, sometimes. The Pretender got some of your countrymen into a pretty scrape with his tricks. There are fools to be had for asking, every where."

"We will no' discuss this question just noo," said Sir Archy, snap-

pishly; "and, to return to the main point, please to inform me, is this loan impracticable?"

"I didn't say it was, all out," said Swaby. "In about a week or two——"

"I must know before three days," interrupted M'Nab.

"His honour's waiting for Mr. Swaby," said Kerry, who now appeared in the room, without either of the others having noticed his entrance.

Sir Archy rose with an angry brow, but spoke not a syllable, while he motioned Kerry to leave the room.

"You must join my brother-in-law, sir," said he at last; "and if our conversation is not already become the gossip of the house, I entreat of you to keep it a secret."

"That, of course," said Swaby; "but I'm thinking I've hit on a way to meet your wishes, so we'll talk of the matter again this evening;" and thus saying, he withdrew, leaving Sir Archy in a frame of mind very far, indeed, from tranquil or composed.

Swaby's surprise at his interview with Sir Archy, whom he never had the slightest suspicion of possessing any property whatever, was even surpassed by his astonishment on hearing the favourable turn of O'Donoghue's affairs; and, while he bestowed the requisite attention to follow the old man's statement, his shrewd mind was also engaged in speculating what probable results might accrue from this unexpected piece of fortune, and how they could best be turned to his own benefit. O'Donoghue was too deeply interested in his own schemes, to question Swaby respecting his business with M'Nab, of which Kerry O'Leary had already given him a hint. The attorney was, therefore, free to deliberate in his own mind how far he might most advantageously turn the prosperity of the one, to the aid of the other, for the sole benefit of himself. It is not necessary, nor would it conduce to the object of this story, to ask the reader's attention to this interview. It will be enough to say, that Swaby heard with pleasure O'Donoghue's disclosure, recognizing, with practised acuteness, how far he could turn such unlooked-for prosperity to his own purposes, and subsidize one brother-in-law, at the expense of both.

While thus each within the limit of this narrow household was following out the thread of his destiny, eagerly bent on their several objects, Kate O'Donoghue sat alone, at the window of her chamber, buried in deep thought. The prospect of her approaching visit to the capital presented itself in so many aspects, that, while offering pleasures and enjoyments none relished more highly than herself, she yet

saw difficulties which might render the step unadvisable, if not perilous. Of all considerations, money was the one which least had occupied any share in her calculations; yet now she bethought herself, that expense must necessarily be incurred, which her uncle's finances could but ill afford. No sooner had this thought occurred to her, than she was amazed it had not struck her before, and she felt actually startled, lest, in her eagerness for the promised pleasure, she had only listened to the suggestion of selfishness. In a moment more she determined to decline the invitation. She was not one to take half measures when she believed a point of principle to be engaged; and the only difficulty now lay, how and in what manner to refuse an offer proffered with so much kindness. The note itself must open the way, thought she, and at the instant she remembered how Mark had taken it from the breakfast-table.

She heard his heavy step as he paced backwards and forwards in his chamber overhead, and without losing another moment, hastily ascended the stairs to his door; her hand was already outstretched to knock, when suddenly she hesitated; a strange confusion came over her faculties —how would Mark regard her request?—would he attribute it to over-eagerness on the subject of the invitation. Such were the questions which occurred to her; and as quick came the answer—"And let him think so. I shall certainly not seek to undeceive him. He alone, of all here, has vouchsafed me neither any show of his affection nor his confidence." The flush mounted to her cheek, and her eyes darkened with the momentary excitement; and at the same instant the door was suddenly thrown open, and Mark stood before her.

Such was his astonishment, however, that for some seconds he could not speak; when at last he uttered in a low, deep voice—

"I thought I heard a hand upon the lock, and I am so suspicious of that fellow, Kerry, who frequently plays the eaves-dropper here——"

"Not when you are alone, Mark?" said Kate, smiling.

"Ay—even then. I have a foolish habit of thinking aloud, of which I strive in vain to break myself; and he seems to know it, too."

"There is another absent trick you have acquired also," said she, laughing. "Do you remember having carried off the note that came while we were at breakfast?"

"Did I?" said he, reddening. "Did I take it off the table? Yes, yes; I remember something of it now. You must forgive me, cousin, if these careless habits take the shape of rudeness." He seemed overwhelmed with confusion, as he added, "I know not why I put it into my pocket; here it is."

And so saying, he drew from the breast of his coat a crushed and crumpled paper, and gave it into Kate's hand. She wished to say something in reply—something which would seem kind and good natured; but, somehow, she faltered and hesitated. She twice got as far as, "I know, Mark—I am certain, Mark;" then unable to say what, perhaps, her very indecision rendered more difficult, she merely uttered a brief "thank you," and withdrew.

"Poor fellow!" said she, as she re-entered her own chamber, "his is the hardest lot of all."

She had often wished to persuade herself that Mark's morose, sullen humour was the discontent of one who felt the ignominy of an inglorious life—that habits of recklessness had covered, but not obliterated the traces of that bold and generous spirit for which his family had been long distinguished; and now, for the first time, she believed she had fallen on the evidences of such a temper. She pondered long on this theme, and fancied how, under circumstances favourable to their development, Mark's good qualities and courageous temper, had won for him both fame and honour. "And here," exclaimed she, half aloud, "here, he may live and die a peasant!" With a deep sigh, she threw herself into a chair, and as if to turn her thoughts into some channel less suggestive of gloom, she opened the letter Mark had given her. Scarcely, however, had she cast her eyes over it, when she uttered a faint cry, too faint, indeed, to express any mere sense of fear, but in an accent in which terror and amazement were equally blended.

The epistle was a brief one—not more than a few lines—and she had read it at a glance, before ever there was time to consider how far her doing so was a breach of confidence; indeed, the intense interest of the contents left little room for any self-examinings. It ran thus:—

"Dear Brother—No precipitation—no haste—nothing can be done without France. T. has now good hopes from that quarter, and if not 30,000, 20,000, or at least 15,000 will be given, and arms for double the number. Youghal is talked of as a suitable spot; and H. has sent charts, &c. over. Above all, be patient; trust no rumours, and rely on us for the earliest and the safest intelligence. L. will hand you this. You must contrive to learn the cipher, as any correspondence discovered would ruin all.

"Your's ever, and in the cause,

"H. R."

Here, then, was the youth she had been commiserating for his ca-

reer of lowly and unambitious hopes—here, the mere peasant! the accomplice of some deep and desperate plot, in which the arms of France, should be employed against the government of England. Was this the secret of his pre-occupation and his gloom? Was it to concentrate his faculties on such a scheme, that he lived this lonely and secluded life? "Oh, Mark, Mark, how have I misjudged you!" she exclaimed, and as she uttered the words, came the thought, quick as a lightning flash, to her mind—what terrible hazards such a temperament as his must incur in an enterprise like this—without experience of men or any knowledge of the world whatever—without habitual prudence, or caution of any kind. The very fact of his mistaking the letter—a palpable evidence of his unfitness for trust. Reckless by nature—more desperate still from the fallen fortunes of his house. What would become of him? Others would wait the time and calculate their chances. He would listen to nothing but the call of danger. She knew him well, from boyhood upwards, and had seen him often more fascinated by peril, than others were by pleasure.

As she reasoned thus, her thoughts insensibly turned to all the dangers of such an enterprise as she believed him engaged in. The fascinating visions of a speculative patriotism, soon gave way before the terrors she now conjured up. She knew he was the only tie that bound his father to existence, and that any misfortune to Mark, would be the old man's death-blow. Nor were these the most poignant of her reflections, for she now remembered how often she had alluded tauntingly to those who lived a life of mean or inglorious ambition; how frequently she had scoffed at the miserable part of such as, endowed with high names and ancient lineage, evinced no desire to emerge from an ignoble position, and assume a station of eminence and power; could she, then, have contributed to this youth's rash step, had her idle words and random speeches driven him to embrace a cause, where his passions, and not his judgment were interested? What misery was in this fear?

Each moment increased the agony of this reflection, while her doubts as to how she ought to act, thickened around her. Sir Archy, alone, was capable of advising her, his calm and unbiassed reason, would be now invaluable, but dare she—even to him, make use of a confidence thus accidentally obtained? Would Mark—could he ever forgive her? and how many others might such a disclosure compromise! In this dilemma, she knew no course open to her, but one—to address herself at once to Mark, to explain how his secret had become known, to learn from him as much as lay in her power of the dangers and

difficulties of the meditated revolt, and if unable to dissuade him from participation, at least to mingle with his resolves all she could of prudence, or good counsel. The determination was scarcely formed, when she was once more at the door of his chamber; she knocked twice, without any reply following, then gently opened the door. The room was vacant, he was gone. I will write to him, said she hurriedly, and with this new resolve, hastened to her chamber, and began a letter.

The task she proposed to herself, was not so easy of accomplishment; a dozen times, she endeavoured while explaining the accident that divulged his secret, to impress him with the hazard of an undertaking, so palpably depicted, and to the safe keeping of which, his own carelessness, might prove fatal; but each effort dissatisfied her. In one place, she seemed not to have sufficiently apologized for her unauthorized cognizance of his note; in another, the stress she laid upon this very point, struck her as too selfish, and too personal in a case, where another's interests were the real consideration at issue; and even when presenting before him the vicissitudes of fortune to which his venturous career would expose him, she felt how every word contradicted the tenor of her own assertions for many a day and week previous. In utter despair how to act, she ended by enclosing the letter with merely these few words:—

"I have read the enclosed, but your secret is safe with me.

"K. O'D."

This done, she sealed the packet and had just written the address, when, with a tap at the door, Sir Archy entered, and approached the table.

With a tact and delicacy he well understood, Sir Archy explained the object of his visit—to press upon Kate's acceptance a sum of money sufficient for her outlay in the capital. The tone of half authority he assumed disarmed her at once, and made her doubt how far she could feel justified in opposing the wishes of her friends concerning her.

"Then you really desire I should go to Dublin," said she.

"I do, Kate, for many reasons—reasons which I shall have little difficulty in explaining to you hereafter."

"I half regret I ever thought of it," said Kate, speaking her thoughts unconsciously aloud.

"Not the less reason perhaps for going," said Sir Archy, drily; while at

the same moment his eye caught the letter bearing Mark O'Donoghue's name.

Kate saw on what his glance was fixed, and grew red with shame and confusion.

"Be it so then, uncle," said she, resolutely. "I do not seek to know the reasons you speak of, for if you were to ask my own against the project, I should not be able to frame them; it was mere caprice."

"I hope so, dearest Kate," said he, with a tone of deep affection—"I hope so with all my heart;" and thus saying, he pressed her hand fervently between his own and left the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A LAST EVENING AT HOME.

With the experience of past events to guide us, it would appear now that a most unaccountable apathy existed in the English Cabinet of the period, with regard to the plan of invasion meditated against Ireland by France; nor is it easy to determine whether this indifference proceeded more from ignorance of the danger, or that amount of information concerning it, which disposed the Minister to regard it as little important.

From whatever cause proceeding, one thing is sufficiently clear—the emissaries of France pervaded the country in every part without impediment or molestation; statistical information the most minute was forwarded to Paris every week; the state of popular opinion, the condition of parties, the amount of troops disposable by Government—even the spirit which animated them, were reported and commented on, and made the subject of discussion in the "bureau" of the War Minister of France. To such an extent was this system carried, that more than once the French authorities became suspicious regarding the veracity of statements, from the very facility with which their details were communicated, and hinted, that such regularity in correspondence might be owing to the polite attentions of the English Cabinet; and to this distrust is in a great measure to be attributed the vacillating and hesitating policy which marked their own deliberations.

Tone's letters show the wearisome toil of his negociation; the assurances of aid obtained after months of painful, harrassing solicitation, deferred or made dependent on some almost impossible conditions; guarantees demanded from him which he neither could nor would accord; information sought, which, were they in actual possession of the country, would have been a matter of difficult acquisition; and after all, when the promised assistance was granted, it came coupled with hints and acknowledgements that the independence of Ireland was nothing in their eyes, save as inflicting a death blow to the power and greatness of England.

In fact, neither party was satisfied with the compact long before the time of putting it in operation arrived. Meanwhile the insurgents spared no efforts to organize a powerful body among the peasantry, and, at least numerically, to announce to France, a strong and effective co-operation. Such reports were necessary to enable Tone to press his demand more energetically; and although he never could have deceived himself as to the inutility of such undisciplined and almost unarmed masses, still they looked plausible on paper, and vouched for the willingness of the people to throw off the yoke of England.

It is now well known, that the French party in Ireland was really very small. The dreadful wrongs inflicted on the Roman Catholic church during the Revolution could not be forgotten or forgiven by that priesthood, who were their brethren; nor could it be supposed that they would lend a willing aid to further a cause which began its march to freedom over the ashes of their church. Such as were best capable of pronouncing on the project—those educated in France—were naturally fearful of a repetition at home of the horrible scenes they had witnessed abroad, and thus the "patriots" lost the aid which, more than any other, could have stirred the heart of the nation. Abstract principles of liberty are not the most effective appeals to a people; and although the French agents were profuse of promises, and the theme of English oppression could be chaunted with innumerable variations, the right chord of native sentiment was never touched, and few joined the cause, save those who, in every country and in every age, are patriots—because they are paupers. Some, indeed, like the young O'Donoghue, were sincere and determined. Drawn in at first by impulses more purely personal than patriotic, they soon learned to take a deep interest in the game, and grew fascinated with a scheme which exalted themselves into positions of trust and importance. The necessity of employing this lure, and giving the adherents of the cause their share of power and influence, was another great source of weakness.

Diversity of opinion arose on every subject; personal altercations of the bitterest kind; reproaches and insinuations, passed continually between them, and it needed all the skill and management of the chiefs to reconcile, even temporarily, these discordant ingredients, and maintain any semblance of agreement among these "United Irishmen."

Among those who lived away from such scenes of conflict, the great complaint was the delay. "What are we waiting for?" "When are we to strike the blow?"—were the questions ever arising; and their inability to answer such satisfactorily to the people, only increased their chagrin and disappointment. If the sanguine betrayed impatience, the despondent—and there are such in every cause—showed signs of vacillation, and threw out dark hints of treachery and betrayal; while between both were the great masses, moved by every passing rumour, and as difficult to restrain to-day, as impossible to muster to-morrow.

Such, briefly, was the condition of the party into which Mark O'Donoghue threw his fortune in life, as reckless of his fate as he was ignorant of the precise objects in view, or the means proposed for their accomplishment.

His influence among the people was considerable. Independently of all claims resulting from his name and family, he was individually a great favourite with them. Personal courage and daring—skill in every manly exercise, and undaunted resolution—are gifts which, when coupled with a rough, good nature, and a really kind heart, are certain of winning their way among a wild and uncultivated people; and thus, Herbert, who scarcely ever uttered a harsh word—whose daily visits to the sick were a duty Sir Archy expected from him—whose readiness to oblige was the theme of every tongue, was less their favourite than his brother.

This influence, which, through Lanty Lawler, was soon reported to the delegates in Dublin, was the means of Mark's being taken into special confidence, and of a command being conferred on him, for the duties and privileges of which, he was informed, a few days would sufficiently instruct him.

Nearly a week had elapsed from the day on which Kate addressed her note to Mark, and he had not yet returned home. Such absences were common enough; but now, she felt an impatience almost amounting to agony, at the thought of what treasonable and dangerous projects he might be engaged in, and the doubt became a torture, how far she ought to conceal her own discovery from others.

At length came the evening before her own departure from Carrigna-curra, and they were seated around the tea-table, thoughtful and

silent by turns, as are they who meet for the last time before separation. Although she heard with pleasure the announcement that Herbert would be her companion to the capital, where he was about to take up his residence as a student in Trinity College, her thoughts wandered away to the gloomier fortunes of Mark, darker as they now seemed, in comparison with the prospects opening before his brother.

Of all the party, Herbert alone was in good spirits. The career was about to begin which had engrossed all his boyish ambition—the great race of intellect his very dreams had dwelt upon. What visions did he conjure of emulative ardour to carry off the prize among his companions, and win fame that might reflect its lustre on all his after life. From his very childhood, Sir Archy had instilled into him this thirst for distinction, wisely substituting such an ambition for any other less ennobling. He had taught him to believe that there would be more true honour in the laurels there won, than in all the efforts, however successful, to bring back the lost glories of their once proud house. And now he was on the very threshold of that career his heart was centred in. No wonder is it, then, if his spirits were high, and his pulse throbbing. Sir Archy's eyes seldom wandered from him; he seemed as if reading the accomplishment of all his long teaching; and as he watched the flashing looks and the excited gestures of the boy, appeared as though calculating how far such a temperament might minister to, or mar his future fortune.

The O'Donoghue was more thoughtful than usual. The idea of approaching solitude, so doubly sad to those advanced in life, depressed him. His evenings, of late, had been passed in a happy enjoyment he had not known for years before. Separation to the young is but the rupture of the ties of daily intercourse—to the old, it has all the solemn meaning of a warning, and tells of the approach of the last dreadful parting, when adieux are said for ever. He could not help those gloomy forebodings, and he was silent and depressed.

Kate's attention wandered from the theme of Herbert's anticipated pleasures, to think again of him, for whom none seemed now interested. She had listened long and anxiously for some sound to mark his coming, but all was still without, and on the road, for miles, the moonlight showed no object moving; and, at last, a deep reverie succeeded to this state of anxiety, and she sat lost to all around her. Meanwhile, Sir Archy, in a low, impressive voice, was warning Herbert of the dangers of involving himself in any way in the conflicts of party politics, then so high in Dublin.

He cautioned him to reject those extreme opinions so fascinating to

young minds, and which either give an unwarrantable bias to the judgment through life, or which, when their fallacy is detected, lead to a reaction as violent, and notions as false. "Win character and reputation first, Herbert: gain the position from which your opinions will come with influence, and then, my boy, with judgment not rashly formed, and a mind trained to examine great questions—then, you may fearlessly enter the lists, free to choose your place and party. You cannot be a patriot this way, in the newspaper sense of the term.—It is possible, too, our dear Kate may deem your ambition a poor one——"

"Kate, did you say?—Kate, uncle," said she, raising her head, with a look of abstraction.

"Yes, my dear, I was speaking o' some of the dangers that beset the first steps in political opinion, and telling Herbert that peril does not always bring honour."

"True, sir—true: but Mark——" She stopped, and the blush that covered her face suffused her neck and shoulders. It was not till her lips pronounced the name, that she detected how inadvertently she had revealed the secret of her own musings.

"Mark, my sweet Kate is, I trust, in no need of my warnings; he lives apart from the struggle, and were it otherwise, he is older, and more able to form his opinions than Herbert, here."

These words were spoken calmly, and with a studious desire to avoid increasing Kate's confusion.

"What about Mark?" cried the O'Donoghue, suddenly aroused by the mention of the name. "It's very strange he should not be here to say 'good-bye' to Kate. Did any one tell him of the time fixed for your departure?"

"I told him of it, and he has promised to be here," said Herbert; "he was going to Beerhaven for a day or two, for the shooting; but, droll enough, he has left his gun behind him."

"The boy's not himself at all, latterly," muttered the old man. "Lanty brought up two horses here the other day, and he would not even go to the door to look at them. I don't know what he's thinking of."

Kate never spoke, and tried with a great effort to maintain a look of calm unconcern; when, with that strange instinct so indescribable and so inexplicable, she felt Sir Archy's eyes fixed upon her, her cheek became deadly pale.

"There, there he comes, and at a slapping pace, too!" cried Herbert; and, as he spoke, the clattering sound of a fast gallop was heard ascending the causeway, and the next moment the bell sent forth a loud summons.

"I knew he'd keep his word," said the boy, proudly, as he walked to meet him. The door opened, and Frederick Travers appeared.

So unexpected was the disappointment, it needed all Sir Archy's practised politeness to conceal from the young Guardsman the discomfiture of the rest: nor did he entirely succeed, for Frederick was no common observer, and failed not to detect in every countenance around, that his was not the coming looked for.

"I owe a thousand apologies for the hour of my visit, not to speak of its abruptness," said he, graciously; "but we only learned accidentally to-day that Herbert was going up to Dublin, and my father sent me to request he would join our party."

"He is about to enter college," said Sir Archy, half fearing to direct the youth's mind from the great object of his journey.

"Be it so," said Fred, gaily; "we'll talk Virgil and Homer on the road."

"I'm afraid such pleasant companionship may put Greece and Rome in the background," said Sir Archy, drily.

"I'll answer for it he'll be nothing the worse for the brief respite from study; besides you'd not refuse me his company, when I tell you that otherwise I must travel alone. My father in his wisdom having decided to despatch me half a day in advance, to make preparations for his arrival. Is that quite fair, Miss O'Donoghue?"

"I protest I think not, as regards us. As for you," added she, archly, "I should say, so accomplished a traveller always finds sufficient to amuse him on the least interesting journey. I remember a little theory of yours on that subject; you mentioned it the first time I had the pleasure to meet you."

The allusion was with reference to the manner in which Travers made her acquaintance in the Bristol packet, and the cool assurance of which, she, with most womanly pertinacity, had not yet forgiven. Travers, who had often felt ashamed of the circumstance, and had hoped it long since forgotten, looked the very picture of confusion.

"I perceive Sir Archibald has not taught you to respect his native proverb, Miss O'Donoghue, and let 'by-gones be by-gones.'"

"I hae taught her nothing Scotch, sir," replied Sir Archy, smiling; "but to love a thistle, and that e'en, because it has sting."

"Not from those that know how to take it, uncle," said she, archly, and with a fond expression that lit up the old man's face in smiles.

The Guardsman was less at his ease than usual; and, having arranged the matter of his visit satisfactorily, arose to take his leave.

"Then you'll be ready for me at eight, Herbert. My father is a

martinet in punctuality, and the phæton will not be a second behind time; remember that, Miss O'Donoghue, for he makes no exception, even for ladies."

He moved towards the door, then turning suddenly, said—

"By-the-bye, have you heard any thing of a movement in the country here about us? The Government have apparently got some information on the subject, but I suspect without any foundation whatever."

"To what extent does this information go?" said Sir Archy, cautiously.

"That I can't tell you; all I know is, that my father has just received a letter from the Castle, stating that we are living in the very midst of an organised rebellion, only waiting the signal for open revolt.

"That same rebellion has been going on, to my knowledge, something more than forty years" said the O'Donoghue, laughing; "and I never knew of a Lord Lieutenant or Chief Secretary who didn't discover the plot, and save the kingdom: always leaving a nest egg of treason for his successor to make a character by."

"I'm no' so sure it will not come to a hatching yet," said Sir Archy, with a dry shake of the head.

"If it is to come, I wish with all my heart it might while I have a chance of being a spectator," said Travers; then suddenly remembering that the levity of the remark might not please the others, he muttered a few words about a hope of better prospects, and withdrew.

During this brief colloquy, Kate listened with breathless interest to learn some fact, or even some well-grounded suspicion which might serve to put Mark on his guard; but nothing could be more vague and indecisive than Travers's information, and it was evident that he had not concealed any thing he knew. Was he in a position to learn more, was the next question to herself—might he not be able to ascertain where the suspicion of Government rested, and on whom? Her decisions were seldom but the work of a second, and as soon as this thought struck her, she determined to act upon it. Slipping noiselessly from the room, she hastily threw a shawl around her, and hurried from the house by a small postern door, which, leading down to the high road, was considerably shorter than the causeway by which Travers must pass.

It was no time for the indulgence of bashfulness, and indeed her thoughts were far too highly excited by another's destiny to leave any room to think of herself; and short as the path was, it sufficed to let her arrange her plan of procedure, even to the very words she should employ.

"I must not tell him it is for Mark," said she; "he must think it is a general desire to save any rash or misguided enthusiast from ruin. But, here he comes;" and at the same instant the figure of a man was seen approaching, leading his horse by the bridle. The dark shadow of the castle fell across the road at the spot, and served to make the form dim and indistinct. Kate waited not for his coming nearer, but advancing hastily towards him, cried out—

"Captain Travers," I have a favour to ask of you—one, which my coming thus to seek——"

"Say no more, Kate, lest I hear what was never intended for my ears," said a low, deep voice.

"Mark—cousin Mark, is this you," cried she, with mingled pleasure and shame.

"Yes," replied he, in a tone of still deeper gravity; "I grieve to disappoint you—it is me."

"Oh, Mark, mistake me not—do not wrong me," said she, laying her hand affectionately on his arm. I have longed so much to see you—to speak to you, ere we went away."

"To see *me*—to speak to *me*," said he, stepping back, and letting the moonlight fall full upon his features, now pale as death; "it was not *me* you expected to meet here."

"No, Mark, but it was for you I came; I wished to serve—perhaps to save you. I know your secret, Mark, but it is safe with me."

"And I know yours, young lady," retorted he, bitterly. "I cannot say how far my discretion will rival your own."

As he spoke, a horseman darted rapidly past, and as he emerged from the shadow, turned round in his saddle, stared fixedly at the figures before him, and then taking off his hat, said—

"Good-night, Miss O'Donoghue."

When Kate recovered the shock of this surprise, she found herself alone—Mark had disappeared; and she now returned slowly to the castle, her heart torn with opposing emotions, among which wounded pride was not the least poignant.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"A SUPPER PARTY."

As we are about to withdraw our reader for a brief period from the scenes wherein he has so kindly lingered with us hitherto, we may be permitted to throw on them a last look ere we part.

On the evening which followed that recorded in our last chapter, the two old men were seated alone in the tower of Carrig-na-curra, silent and thoughtful, each following out in his mind the fortunes of him for whom his interest was deepest, and each sad with the sorrow that never spares those who are, or who deem themselves, forsaken.

Unaided memory can conjure up no such memorials of past pleasure as come from the objects and scenes associated with days and nights of happiness; they appeal with a force mere speculation never suggests, and bring back all the lesser, but more touching incidents of hourly intercourse, so little at the time—so much when remembered years afterwards.

The brightest moments of life are the most difficult to recall; they are like the brilliant lights upon a landscape, which we may revisit a hundred times, yet never behold under the same favourable circumstances, nor gaze on with the same enthusiasm as at first. It was thus that both the O'Donoghue and Sir Archy now remembered her whose presence lightened so many hours of solitude, and even grafted hope upon the tree scathed and withered by evil fortune. Several efforts to start a topic of conversation were made by each, but all equally fruitless, and both relapsed into a moody silence, from which they were suddenly aroused by a violent ringing at the gate, and the voices of many persons talking together, among which Mark O'Donoghue's could plainly be heard.

"Yes, but I insist upon it," cried he; "to refuse will offend me."

Some words were then spoken in a tone of remonstrance, to which he again replied, but with even greater energy—

"What care I for that? This is my father's house, and who shall say that his eldest son cannot introduce his friends ——

A violent jerk of the bell drowned the remainder of the speech.

"We are about to hae company, I perceive," said Sir Archy, looking cautiously about to secure his book and his spectacles before retreating to his bed room.

"Bedad, you just guessed it," said Kerry, who, having reconnoitred the party through a small window beside the door, had now prudently adjourned to take council whether he should admit them. "There's eight or nine at laste, and it is'nt fresh and fasting either they are."

"Why don't you open the door?—do you want your bones broken for you," said the O'Donoghue, harshly.

"I'd let them gang the gate they cam," said Sir Archy, sagely; "if I may hazard a guess from their speech, they are no in a fit state to visit any respectable house. Hear till that?"

A fearful shout now was heard outside.

"What's the rascal staring at?" cried the O'Donoghue, with clenched teeth. "Open the door this instant."

But the words were scarcely uttered, when a tremendous crash resounded through the whole building, and then a heavy noise like the fall of some weighty object.

"'Tis the window he's bruk in—divil a lie," cried Kerry, in an accent of unfeigned terror; and, without waiting a second, he rushed from the room to seek some place of concealment from Mark's anger.

The clash of the massive chain was next heard, as it banged heavily against the oak door; bolt after bolt was quickly shot, and Mark, calling out—"Follow me—this way," rudely pushed wide the door and entered the tower. A mere passing glance was enough to show that his excitement was not merely the fruit of passion—his eyes wild and bloodshot, his flushed cheek, his swollen and heavy lips, all betrayed that he had drank deeply. His cravat was loose and his vest open, while the fingers of his right hand were one mass of blood, from the violence with which he had forced his entrance.

"Come along, Talbot—Holt, this way—come in boys," said he, calling to those behind. "I told them we should find you here, though they insisted it was too late."

"Never too late to welcome a guest, Mark, but always too early to part with one," cried the O'Donoghue, who, although shocked at the condition he beheld his son in, resolved to betray for the time no apparent consciousness of it.

"This is my friend, Harry Talbot, father—Sir Archy M'Nab, my uncle. Holt, where are you? I'll be hanged if they're not slipped away; and with a fearful imprecation on their treachery, he rushed from the room, leaving Talbot to make his own advances. The rapid tramp of

feet, and the loud laughter of the fugitives without, did not for a second or two permit of his few words being heard; but his manner and air had so far assured Sir Archy, that he stopped short as he was about to leave the room, and saluted him courteously.

"It would be very ungracious in me," said Talbot, smiling, "to disparage my friend Mark's hospitable intentions, but in truth I feel so much ashamed for the manner of our entry here this evening, that I cannot express the pleasure such a visit would have given me under more becoming circumstances."

Sir Archibald's surprise at the tone in which these words were delivered, did not prevent him making a suitable reply, while relinquishing his intention of retiring, he extinguished his candle, and took a seat opposite Talbot.

Having in an early chapter of our tale presented this gentleman to our reader's notice, we have scarcely any thing to add on the present occasion. His dress indeed was somewhat different; then, he wore a riding costume—now he was habited in a frock richly braided, and ornamented with a deep border of black fur; a cap of the same skin, from which hung a band of deep gold lace, he also carried in his hand—a costume which at the time would have been called foreign.

While Sir Archy was interchanging courtesies with the newly-arrived guest, the O'Donoghue, by dint of reiterated pulling at the bell, had succeeded in inducing Kerry O'Leary to quit his sanctuary, and venture to the door of the apartment, which he did with a caution only to be acquired by long practice.

"Is he here, sir?" whispered he, as his eyes took a rapid but searching survey of the apartment. "Blessed virgin, but he's in a dreadful temper to-night."

"Bring some supper here directly," cried O'Donoghue, striking the ground angrily with his heavy cane; "if I have to tell you again, I hope he'll break every bone in your skin."

"I request you will not order any refreshment for me, sir," said Talbot, bowing; "we partook of a very excellent supper at a little cabin in the glen, where, among other advantages, I had the pleasure of making your son's acquaintance."

"Ah, indeed, at Mary's," said the old man. "There are worse places than that little 'shebeen;' but you must permit me to offer you a glass of claret, which never tastes the worse in company with a grouse pie.

"You must hae found the travelling somewhat rude in these parts," said M'Nab, who thus endeavoured to draw from the stranger some hint either as to the object or the road of his journey.

"We were not over particular on that score," said Talbot, laughing. "A few young college men seeking some days' amusement in the wild mountains of this picturesque district, could well afford to rough it for the enjoyment of the ramble."

"You should visit us in the autumn," said O'Donoghue, "when our heaths and arbutus blossoms are in beauty; then, they who have travelled far, tell me that there is nothing to be seen in Switzerland finer than this valley. Draw your chair over here, and let me have the pleasure of a glass of wine with you."

The party had scarcely taken their places at the table, when Mark re-entered the room, heated and excited with the chase of the fugitives.

"They're off," muttered he, angrily, "down the glen, and I only hope they may lose their way in it, and spend the night upon the heather."

As he spoke, he turned his eyes to the corner of the room, where Kerry, in a state of the most abject fear, was endeavouring to extract a cork from a bottle by means of a very impracticable screw.

"Ah! you there," cried he, as his eyes flashed fire. "Hold the bottle up—hold it steady, you old fool," and with a savage grin he drew a pistol from his breast pocket and levelled it at the mark.

Kerry was on his knees, one hand on the floor and in the other the bottle, which, despite all his efforts, he swayed backwards and forwards.

"O master, darlin'—O Sir Archy, dear—O Joseph and Mary!"

"I've drank too much wine to hit it flying," said Mark, with a half drunken laugh, "and the fool won't be steady. There;" and as he spoke, the crash of the report resounded through the room, and the neck of the bottle was snapped off about half an inch below the cork.

"Neatly done, Mark—not a doubt of it," said the O'Donoghue, as he took the bottle from Kerry's hand, who, with a pace a kangaroo might have envied, approached the table, actually dreading to stand up straight in Mark's presence.

At the risk of being thought an epicure," said M'Nab, "I maun say I'd like my wine handled more tenderly.

"It was cleverly done though," said Talbot, helping himself to a bumper from the broken flask. "I remember a trick we used to have at St. Cyr, which was, to place a bullet on a cork, and then, at fifteen paces cut away the cork and drop the bullet into the bottle."

"No man ever did that twice," cried Mark, rudely.

"I'll wager a hundred guineas I do it twice, within five shots," said Talbot, with the most perfect coolness.

"Done, for a hundred—I say done," said Mark, slapping him familiarly on the shoulder.

"I'll not win your money on such unfair terms," said Talbot, laughing, "and if I can refrain from taking too much of this excellent Bourdeaux, I'll do the trick to-morrow without a wager."

Mark, like most persons who place great store by feats of skill and address, felt vexed at the superiority claimed by another, answered carelessly, "that, after all, perhaps the thing were easier than it seemed."

"Very true," chimed in Talbot, mildly; "what we have neither done ourselves nor seen done by another, has always the appearance of difficulty. What is called wisdom is little other than the power of calculating success or failure on grounds of mere probability.

"Your definition has the advantage of being sufficient for the occasion," said Sir Archy, smiling. "I am happy to find our glen has not disappointed you; but if you have not seen the Lake and the Bay of Glengariff, I anticipate even a higher praise from you."

"We spent the day on the water," replied Talbot; "and if it were not a heresy, I should affirm, that these bold mountains are grander and more sublime in the desolation of winter, than even when clothed in the purple and gold of summer. There was a fine sea, too, rolling into that great Bay, bounding upon the rocks, and swelling proudly against the tall cliffs, which, to my eye, is more pleasurable than the glassy surface of calm water. Motion is the life of inanimate objects, and life has always its own powers of excitement."

While they conversed thus, M'Nab, endeavouring, by adroit allusions to the place, to divine the real reason of the visit, and Talbot, by encomiums on the scenery, or, occasionally, by the expression of some abstract proposition, seeking to avoid any direct interrogatory—Mark, who had grown weary of a dialogue which, even in his clearer moments, would not have interested him, drank deeply from the wine before him, filling and re-filling a large glass unceasingly, while the O'Donoghue merely paid that degree of attention which politeness demanded.

It was thus that, while Sir Archy believed he was pushing Talbot closely on the objects of his coming, Talbot was, in reality, obtaining from him much information about the country generally, the habits of the people, and their modes of life, which he effected in the easy, unconstrained manner of one perfectly calm and unconcerned. "The life of a fisherman," said he, in reply to a remark of Sir Archy's—"the life of a fisherman is, however, a poor one; for though his gains are great, at certain seasons, there are days—ay, whole months, he cannot

venture out to sea. Now it strikes me, that in that very Bay of Bantry the swell must be terrific, when the wind blows from the west, or the nor'-west."

"You are right—quite right," answered M'Nab, who at once entered freely into a discussion of the condition of the Bay, under the various changing circumstances of wind and tide. "Many of our poor fellows have been lost within my own memory, and, indeed, save when we have an easterly wind——"

"An easterly wind?" re-echoed Mark, lifting his head suddenly from between his hands, and staring in half-drunken astonishment around him. "Is that the toast—did you say that?"

"With all my heart," said Sir Archy, smiling. "There are few sentiments deserve a bumper better, by any who live in these parts. Won't you join us, Mr. Talbot?"

"Of course I will," said Talbot, laughing, but with all his efforts to seem at ease, a quick observer might have remarked the look of warning he threw towards the young O'Donoghue.

"Here, then," cried Mark, rising, while the wine trickled over his hand from a brimming goblet—"I'll give it—are you ready?"

"All ready, Mark," said the O'Donoghue, laughing heartily at the serious gravity of Mark's countenance.

"Confound it," cried the youth, passionately; "I forget the jingle."

"Never mind—never mind," interposed Talbot, slily; "we'll pledge it with as good a mind."

"That's—that's it," shouted Mark, as the last word clinked upon his memory. "I have it now," and his eyes sparkled, and his brows were met, as he called out—

"A stout heart and mind,
And an easterly wind,
And the devil behind
The Saxon."

"Sir Archy laid down his glass untasted, while Talbot, bursting forth into a well-acted laugh, cried out, "You must excuse me from repeating your amiable sentiment, which, for aught I can guess, may be a sarcasm on my own country."

"I'd like to hear the same toast explained," said Sir Archy, cautiously, while his looks wandered alternately from Mark to Talbot.

"So you shall, then," replied Mark, sternly, "and this very moment too."

"Come, that's fair," chimed in Talbot, while he fixed his eyes on the youth, with such a steady gaze as seemed actually to have pierced the dull vapour of his clouded intellect, and flashed light upon his addled brain. "Let us hear your explanation."

Mark, for a second or two, looked like one suddenly awakened from a deep sleep, and trying to collect his wandering faculties, while, as if instinctively seeking the clue to his bewilderment from Talbot, he never turned his eyes from him. As he sat thus, he looked the very ideal of half-drunken stupidity.

"I'm afraid we have no right to ask the explanation," whispered Talbot into M'Nab's ear. "We ought to be satisfied, if he give us the rhyme, even though he forgot the reason."

"I'm thinking you're right, sir," replied M'Nab; "but I suspect we hae na the poet before us, ony mair than the interpreter."

Mark's faculties, in slow pursuit of Talbot's meaning, had just at this instant overtaken their object, and he burst forth into a boisterous fit of laughter, which, whatever sentiment it might have excited in the others, relieved Talbot, at least, from all his former embarrassment: he saw that Mark had, though late, recognised his warning, and was at once relieved from any uneasiness on the score of his imprudence.

Sir Archy was, however, very far from feeling satisfied. What he had heard, brief and broken as it was, but served to excite his suspicions, and make him regard this guest as at least a very doubtful character. Too shrewd a diplomatist to push his inquiries any further, he adroitly turned the conversation upon matters of comparative indifference, reserving to himself the part of acutely watching Talbot's manner, and narrowly scrutinizing the extent of his acquaintance with Mark O'Donoghue. In whatever school Talbot had been taught, his skill was more than a match for Sir Archy's. Not only did he at once detect the meaning of the old man's policy; but he contrived to make it subservient to his own views, by the opportunity it afforded him of estimating the influence he was capable of exerting over his nephew; and how far, if need were, Mark should become dependent on his will, rather than on that of any member of his own family. The frankness of his manner, the seeming openness of his nature, rendered his task a matter of apparent amusement; and none at the table looked in every respect more at ease than Harry Talbot.

While Sir Archy was thus endeavouring, with such skill as he possessed, to worm out the secret reason—and such, he well knew, there must be—of Talbot's visit to that unfrequented region, Kerry O'Leary was speculating, with all his imaginative ability, how best to account

for that event. The occasion was one of more than ordinary difficulty. Talbot looked neither like a bailiff nor a sheriff's officer; neither had he outward signs of a lawyer or an attorney. Kerry was conversant with the traits of each of these. If he were a suitor for Miss Kate, his last guess, he was a day too late.

"But sure he couldn't be that: he'd never come with a throop of noisy vagabonds, in the dead of the night, av he was after the young lady. Well, well, he bates me out—sorra lie in it," said he, drawing a heavy sigh, and crossing his hands before him in sad resignation.

"On my conscience, then, it was a charity to cut your hair for you, any how!" said Mrs. Branagan, who had been calmly meditating on the pistol-shot, which, in grazing Kerry's hair, had somewhat damaged his locks.

"See, then—by the holy mass! av he went half an inch lower, it's my life he'd be after taking; and if he was fifty O'Donoghues, I'd have my vingince. Bad cess to me, but they think the likes of me isn't fit to live at all."

"They do," responded Mrs. Branagan, with a mild puff of smoke from the corner of her mouth—"they do; and if they never did worse than extarminate such varmin, their sowls would have an easier time of it."

Kerry's brow lowered, and his lips muttered; but no distinct reply was audible.

"Sorra bit of good I see in ye at all," said she, with inexorable severity. "I mind the time ye used to tell a body what was doing above stairs; and, though half what ye said was lies, it was better than nothing: but now yer as stupid and lazy as the ould beast there fornint the fire—not a word out of yer head from morning to night. Ayeh, is it your hearin's failin' ye?"

"I wish to the Blessed Mother it was," muttered he fervently to himself.

"There's a man now eatin' and drinkin' in the parlour, and the sorra more ye know about him, than if he was the Queen of Sheba."

"Don't I, thin—maybe not," said Kerry, tauntingly, and with a look of such well-affected secrecy, that Mrs. Branagan was completely deceived by it.

"What is he, then? spake it out free this minit," said she. "Bad cess to you, do you want to trate me like an informer."

"No, indeed, Mrs. Branagan; its not that same I'd even to you—sure I knew your people—father and mother's side—two generations back. Miles Buoy—yallow Miles, as they called him—was the finest

judge of a horse in Kerry—I wonder now he didn't make a power of money."

"And so he did, and spint it after. 'Twas blackguards, with ould gaiters, and one spur on them, that ate up every shilling he saved."

"Well, well! think of that, now," said Kerry, with the sententiousness of one revolving some strange and curious social anomaly; "and that's the way it wint."

"Wasn't it a likely way enough," said Mrs. Branagan, with flashing eyes, "feedin' a set of spalpeens that thought of nothing but chating the world. The sight of a pair of top boots gives me the heartburn to this day."

"Mine warms to them, too," said Kerry, timidly, who ventured on his humble pun with deep humility.

A contemptuous scowl was Mrs. Branagan's reply, and Kerry resumed.

"Them's the changes of would—rich yesterday—poor to-day! Don't I know what poverty is well myself. Augh! sure enough they wor the fine times, when I rode out on a beast worth eighty guineas in goold, wid clothes on my back a lord might envy; and now, look at me!"

Mrs. Branagan, to whom the rhetorical figure seemed a direct appeal, did look; and assuredly the inspection conveyed nothing flattering, for she turned away abruptly, and smoked her pipe with an air of profound disdain.

"Faix ye may say so," continued Kerry, converting her glance into words. "'Tis a poor object I am this blessed day. The coat on my back is more like a transparency, and my small clothes, saving your favour, is as hard to get into as a fishing-net; and if I was training for the coorse, I couldn't be on shorter allowance."

"What's that yer saying about yer vittals?" said the cook, turning fiercely towards him. "There's not your equal for an appetite from this to Cork. It's little time a Kerry cow would keep you in beef; and it's an ill skin it goes into. Yer a disgrace to a good family."

"Well, I am, and there's no denying it!" ejaculated Kerry, with a sigh that sounded far more like despair than resignation.

"Is it to hang yourself you have that piece of a rope there?" said she, pointing to the end of a stout cord that depended from Kerry's pocket.

"Maybe it might come to that same yet," said he, and then putting his hand into his pocket, he drew forth a great coil of rope, to the end of which a leaden weight was fastened. "There, now," resumed he, "Yer a cute woman—can ye tell me what's the meanin of that?"

Mrs. Branagan gave one look at the object in question, and then

turned away, as though the enquiry was one beneath her dignity to investigate.

"Some would call it a clothes-line, and more would say it was for fishing; but sure there's no sign of hooks on it at all; and what's the piece of lead for?—that's what bothers me out entirely." These observations were so many devices to induce Mrs. Branagan to offer her own speculations; but they failed utterly—that sage personage not deigning to pay the least attention either to Kerry or the subject of his remarks.

"Well, I'll just leave it where I found it," said he, in a half soliloquy, but which had the effect of at least arousing the curiosity of his companion.

"And where was that?" asked she.

"Outside there, before the hall door," said he, carelessly, "where I got this little paper book too," and he produced a small pocket almanack, with blank pages interleaved, some of which had short pencil memoranda. "I'll leave them both there, for, somehow, I don't like the look of either of them."

"Read us a bit of it first, anyhow," said Mrs. Branagan, in a more conciliating tone than she had yet employed.

"'Tis what I can't do, then," said Kerry; "for it's writ in some outlandish tongue that's past me altogether."

"And you found them at the door, ye say?"

"Out there fornint the tower. 'Twas the chaps that run away from Master Mark that dropped them. Ye'r a dhroll bit of a rope as ever I seen," added he, as he poised the lead in his hand, "av a body knew only what to make of ye:" then turning to the book, he pored for several minutes over a page, in which there were some lines written with a pencil. "Be my conscience I have it," said he, at length; "and faix it wasn't bad of me to make it out. What do you think, now, the rope is for?"

"Sure I tould you afore I didn't know."

"Well, then, hear it, and no lie in it—'tis for measurin' the say."

"Measurin' the say! What bother you're talking; isn't the say thousands and thousands of miles long."

"And who says it isn't?—but for measurin' the depth of it, that's what it is. Listen to this—'Bantry Bay, eleven fathoms at low water inside of Whiddy Island; but the shore current at half ebb makes landing difficult with any wind from the westward;' and here's another piece, half rubbed out, about flat-bottomed boats being best for the surf."

"'Tis the smugglers again," chimed in Mrs. Branagan, as though summing up her opinion on the evidence.

"Troth, then, I don't think so; they never found it hard to land, no matter how it blew. I'm thinking of a way to find it out at last."

"And what's that?"

"I'll just go up to the parlour, wid an innocent face on me, and I'll lay the rope and the little book down on the table before the strange man there; and I'll just say, 'There's the things your honour dropped at the door outside;' and maybe ould Archy won't have the saycret out of him."

"Do that, Kerry avich," said Mrs. Branagan, who at length vouchsafed a hearty approval of his skill in devices. "Do that, and I'll broil a bit o' meat for ye agin ye come down."

"Wid an onion on it, av it's plazing to ye, ma'am," said Kerry, insinuatingly.

"Sure I know how ye like it; and if ye have the whole of the saycret, maybe you'd get a dhrop to wash it down besides.

"And wish you health and happy days, Mrs. Branagan," added Kerry, with a courteous gallantry he always reserved for the kitchen; so saying, he arose from his chair, and proceeded to arrange his dress in a manner becoming the dignity of his new mission, rehearsing at the same time the mode of his entry.

"'Tis the rope and the little book, your honour, I'll say, that ye dropped outside there, and sure it would be a pity to lose it, afther all your trouble measuring the places. That will be enough for ould Archy; let him get a sniff of the game once, and begorra he'll run him home by himself afterwards."

With this sensible reflection, Kerry ascended the stairs in high good humour at his own sagacity, and the excellent reward which awaited it on his return. As he neared the door, the voices were loud and boisterous; at least Mark's was such; and it seemed as if Talbot was endeavouring to moderate the violent tone in which he spoke, and successfully, too; for a loud burst of laughter followed, in which Talbot appeared to join heartily.

"Maybe I'll spoil your fun," said Kerry, maliciously, to himself, and he opened the door, and entered.

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